

Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Plan

Goal:

To reduce injuries and deaths of coastal bottlenose dolphins due to accidental entanglement in U.S. commercial fishing gear.

Affected Fisheries:

- North Carolina Inshore Gillnet
- Southeast Atlantic Gillnet
- Southeastern U.S. Atlantic Shark Gillnet
- U.S. Mid-Atlantic Coastal Gillnet
- Atlantic Blue Crab Trap/Pot
- Mid-Atlantic Haul/Beach Seine
- North Carolina Long Haul Seine
- North Carolina Roe Mullet Stop Net
- Virginia Pound Net



Credit:
NOAA OAR/
Undersea
Research Program

Meetings:

Feb. 27-Mar. 1, 2002

Mar. 27-28, 2002

Apr. 23-25, 2002

Rulemaking:

May 2002: Team submits report.

July 2002: Draft rule available for public comment.

Dec. 2002: Final rule available.

Why Do We Need a Plan?

Fishermen and marine mammals have shared the oceans for centuries. They often travel and fish in the same areas at the same time. So, it's not surprising that marine mammals are accidentally caught in fishing gear— some escape unharmed while others are injured or die.

Managing this "incidental take," as it is called, is a job assigned to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) by Congress under provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

What will the Plan Do?

One goal of the MMPA has been to reduce the number of marine mammals that die in commercial fishing operations to a minimal rate, relative to population abundance, while taking into account the economics of the affected fisheries, the availability of existing technology, and existing state or regional fishery

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management plans.

With the help of the Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Team (Team), NMFS is developing management actions to reduce the incidental mortality of coastal bottlenose dolphins. To protect the marine mammal stocks in the most trouble, NMFS develops Take Reduction Plans for fisheries with the greatest incidental take.

Who is on the Team?

The Team consists of fishing industry representatives, dolphin experts, state and federal officials, and other interested parties. Team discussions provide an opportunity for stakeholders to have significant input into management measures and ensure that only measures necessary to meet the goals established in the MMPA are implemented.

What's in the Plan?

- Review of bottlenose dolphin stock assessment reports and new information;
- Estimate of the total number of dolphins being taken annually by fishery;
- Discussion of all alternate measures considered and reviewed by the Team and why they were rejected or accepted;
- Recommended regulatory and voluntary measures;
- Estimates of the percentage of the required bycatch reduction that will be achieved by each recommended measure;
- Monitoring plans to determine the success of each measure; and
- Recommended dates for achieving specific objectives of the plan.

Immediate Goal:

To reduce, within 6 months of plan implementation, the mortality or serious injury of marine mammals taken in the course of commercial fishing operations to levels less than the Potential Biological Removal (PBR) Level. PBR is the calculated number of human-caused deaths per year each marine mammal stock can withstand and still reach an optimum population level.

Long-term Goal:

To Reduce, within 5 years of plan implementation, incidental mortality and serious injury to a zero mortality and serious injury rate goal.

How Do I Participate?

Meetings are open to the public, and both NMFS and the Team would like to hear your concerns and ideas to ensure that management is as effective as possible.

Please contact Bill Foster at (252) 986-2430 to learn more about upcoming meetings, the process, and Team members who are representing your interests.